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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY
WASHINGTON

September 11, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale

SUBJECT:

Broadcasting to Cuba

This memo will attempt to cover the present status of radio broadcasting to Cuba, possibilities of additional radio broadcasting, and the possible use of television to Cuba.

I. Present Operations

A. Short Wave - Overt

1. VOA - It is USIA's view that our short wave capability (VOA) is operating at an optimum technical level. We now broadcast nine hours daily in Spanish, three hours of which is devoted specifically to Cuban programming. In December 1962 the VOA's new Greenville, North Carolina, facility will become operational, giving a substantial increase in signal strength.

Programming is built around hard news and commentary, features and local Cuban happenings, particularly items not carried in the Castro/Communist media.

Listenership is limited by the availability of short wave receivers, estimated to be from 15 to 25% of the total number of receivers on the island (the number of short wave units is calculated to be between 195,000 and 325,000). However, Opa Locka interrogations indicate a very high percentage of VOA listenership at least in this particular group. (In June and July, of a total of 1370 refugees questioned on this point, 625 declared themselves regular listeners and were able to identify VOA programs by title or content.)

2. Short Wave Broadcasting - Covert

a. Radio Americas, in addition to its medium wave broadcasts provides for short wave simulcast of all medium wave programs. The transmitter, which has a power output of seven and one half kilowatts, is capable of delivering a good signal to the target area but is subjected to heavy jamming.

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Declassified/Released on 12-28-88
Previously (FIS-421) under provisions of E.O. 12958
by N. Mason, National Security Council

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b. Station WRUL, a commercial short wave station with transmitters in Boston and studios in New York, is owned by Metromedia. Its broadcasts are beamed to all of Latin America on five frequencies and are heard well in Cuba on at least two frequencies and to some extent on the remaining three. A thirty-minute program is produced and voiced by Dr. Luis CONTE Aguero, formerly one of Cuba's leading political commentators. The program itself is flexible with no established format although it deals generally in news and commentary on Cuba and other Communist countries. Its major purpose is to encourage resistance against Castro and to warn other Latin American countries of the dangers of Communism. In the processing of a group of recent Cuban arrivals, 12% claimed to have listened to WRUL and a majority of these had heard Dr. CONTE.

B. Medium Wave - Covert

1. Radio Americas, operated under a cover company, is a directly controlled radio station broadcasting on 1160 KC (also short wave) with a power of 50 kilowatts. The station broadcasts ten and one half hours daily, seven days per week, from Swan Island in the Caribbean. Programs are written and taped by Cuban exiles working under Agency supervision and control.

The programs are directed to a general audience with special emphasis on farm and labor groups. Up-to-the-minute news programs are broadcast live on an hourly basis and taped editorials deal with current political problems. The station offers a broad range of music and entertainment, provides a daily religious program and broadcasts a five-minute report in Cantonese on current conditions in Communist China. Radio Americas is heavily jammed, but letters from inside Cuba and interviews with escapees indicate widely scattered listenership. For further details see Joint USIA-CIA Memorandum on Subject dated 4 August 1962.

A survey is now under way to determine if the technical effectiveness of SWAN can be improved.

2. Three commercial stations carry anti-Castro programs purchased by a front organization which is controlled directly by the Agency. The front organization is responsible for supplying programming under the general guidance of the Agency. Policy direction and thematic guidance are afforded on a continuing basis.

Stations used and a brief description of their program format follows:

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Station WGBS in Miami, operating with a power of 50 KW, delivers a strong medium wave signal to all of Cuba and is heard to some extent in Central America. Broadcasts targeted at Cuba are on the air from 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. and repeated at 6:00 to 7:00 a.m. The program consists of news, commentary, and music; and despite the unattractive hours, letters from inside Cuba and refugee interviews indicate that it has gained a reputation for credibility and reportedly enjoys a good audience.

Station WKWF in Key West is a low-powered medium wave station heard moderately well in the western half of Cuba. The program carries news, daily refutation of Castro's propaganda, interviews with Cuban refugees, and letters addressed to the station from persons inside Cuba. Directed at a varied audience, it devotes more time to workers, farmers, and students than to other groups. The two hour program runs from midnight to 2:00 a.m. and is repeated twice for a total of six hours of air time ending at 6:00 a.m.

Station WWL is a Jesuit owned station in New Orleans operating at 50 KW on medium wave. It is heard well in Cuba and audience letters indicate that it has a growing listenership in Mexico. On from 10:30 to 11:00 p.m., EST, the program carries news and commentary, responses to Cuban broadcasts, and occasional interviews during weekdays. On Sundays, it features Bishop BOZA Masvidal who was Cuba's top church official prior to his exile by Castro. Dr. Hermio PORTELL Vila, probably Cuba's leading historian, also produces scripts for this program.

Beginning in October, program time on WWL will be expanded to two hours daily on week days and one hour on Sundays. Evening shows will run from 10:30 to 11:30 p.m., EST, and a morning program running from 5:00 to 6:00 a.m. will be added. The Sunday program will extend from 10:30 to 11:30 p.m. The expanded evening period will permit an increase in the time for refutation of Communist falsehoods and distortions, and permit additional feature programs. The morning program will be a repeat of the previous evening.

3. Guantanamo. A small AFN transmitter on the base. At last reports was broadcasting several short news summaries in Spanish which were reportedly received as far away as Santiago.

C. FM Broadcasting

There is no present use of FM broadcasting to Cuba.

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D. Television

There is no present use of TV to Cuba.

II. Possibilities of Additional Broadcasting

A. Medium Wave

1. Policy Considerations

Both the U.S. and Cuba have ratified the Geneva Telecommunications Convention of 1959 and the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement. These agreements regulate broadcasting so that participating countries may make the most effective use of medium wave for national radio coverage. Both agreements protect participants from "harmful" or "objectionable" interference. In addition, the Geneva agreement contains an implied policy against international broadcasting on the standard, or medium wave, bands.

The Department of State's legal advisor has given us an opinion stating that if the U.S.' high powered medium wave broadcasts to Cuba resulted in harmful or objectionable interference to stations in Cuba or other signatory nations of the Geneva or NARBA agreements, the U.S. would be in violation of said agreements. This opinion further states that if the U.S. violated either agreement, Cuba could lawfully denounce them under its obligations to protect Cuban stations from interference and could lawfully take measures against U.S. stations. The reprisal measures of which Cuba is capable include both jamming U.S. medium wave broadcasts to Cuba and seriously interfering with domestic U.S. medium wave broadcasts over wide areas of the U.S. (as far north as New York and as far west as the Mississippi) with resulting economic repercussions to U.S. broadcasting stations in this area.

The NARBA provides that the contracting governments may settle their differences through diplomatic channels or by any other method agreed upon. If no such method of settlement is adopted, by agreement of the parties the dispute may be submitted to the International Court of Justice or to a single arbitrator. In the absence of such agreement, the dispute is to be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the procedure set forth in Part II, § 2-7. The decision by the International Court of Justice or by the arbitrators is final and binding on the parties and not subject to review.

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In the case of the Geneva Conventions (Telecommunications), an alleged harmful interference would be reported by the offended nation to the International Frequency Registration Board. The Board, after investigation, would make recommendations to the alleged offending nation. In the event that this recommendation was not accepted, the offended nation would proceed under Article 27, Settlement of Differences. Under this section parties would use diplomatic channels or other methods agreed upon. If there were no agreed method for the settlement of the difference, under Annex 4 the parties would be required to follow the special arbitration provisions providing for the appointment of an independent arbitrator whose decision would be binding on the parties.

Another significant domestic consideration results from the fact that any high power medium wave station sited in the U.S. and beaming programs to Cuba would, by necessity, have to use one of the seventeen so-called clear channel frequencies allocated exclusively to the U.S. by the NARBA agreement. These channels are not restricted as to the power of the transmitter. Each of the seventeen clear channels used in the U.S. has been assigned for many years to the largest and most powerful broadcast stations in this country, and they form the economic backbone of the major radio networks in the U.S. Unless one of these channels can be made available, there is no suitable frequency on which the U.S. could broadcast to Cuba with a high power medium wave transmitter. It is very unlikely that a private station would give up a clear channel voluntarily for use by the government or tolerate limitations on its coverage by sharing, and on the other hand any attempt by the government to obtain a frequency involuntarily is certain to get a strong negative response by the broadcast industry. Nevertheless, the use of these facilities for any short term tactical purposes remains a possibility.

It appears that Cuba is in the process of developing a formidable jamming system. It has been confirmed by monitoring observations (by members of our engineering staff and by the FBIS) that Cuba is using noise jammers on Radio Americas' (ex-Radio Swan) shortwave transmissions on 6000 kcs. Radio Americas' medium wave transmissions on 1160 kcs is now being interfered with intentionally by several Cuban broadcasting stations which have been placed on the same frequency. Already identified among these stations are COJK-Camaguey, Radio Imra in Havana (believed to be a new high power transmitter possibly purchased from Czechoslovakia), and a station in Matanzas.

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A very strong Cuban noise jamming station is now also interfering with the Spanish language broadcasts from WGBS in Miami on 710 kcs. The jamming signal is so strong that during the night time hours it is also causing interference to reception of other domestic radio stations in the U. S. operating on 710 kcs in New York City (WOR) and Shreveport, Louisiana (KEEL).

It should also be noted here that the Cuban airways are already cluttered by some 135 medium wave radio stations, of which an estimated 30 are in the Havana area. This, by itself, complicates the problem of broadcasting via medium wave to the island.

Atmospheric conditions also enter the broadcasting picture. According to the VOA, Cuba has one of the highest atmospheric noise levels in the world. Noise is much greater in the summer than in the winter. The higher the noise, the stronger the radio signal required for intelligibility.

Owners of several U. S. commercial radio stations queried by the Voice indicated willingness to cooperate with the government in broadcasting medium wave to Cuba but pointed out some serious financial matters involved. Advertising contracts extend far into the future and would have to be broken if the station undertook Cuban programming. Even though the government paid a radio station for broadcasting its programs during prime evening time, this would severely damage the station's domestic audience and therefore its future commercial standing.

Time could be acquired more easily after normal broadcasting ceases and reception would be better in Cuba, but obviously the audience is smaller after midnight.

2. Technical Feasibility of Medium Wave Broadcasting

There has been no change in the technical aspects of the problem and our memorandum of August 3, 1962 on this aspect of the problem is still completely valid.

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B. FM Transmission

Only one station in Cuba, Havana's "La Voz del INRA" announces transmissions on FM. There are no hard statistics on the number of FM receivers, but the VOA estimates them to be very few.

The 25 to 30 FM transmitters listed in some previous reports are used principally by broadcasting stations as studio-to-transmitter site links.

FM transmissions are covered only in the Geneva agreement under the terms of which transmissions may not originate on or over international waters. This would mean that any FM transmission would have to be made from U.S. territory, territorial waters or air space. No present U.S. facilities can send a clear FM signal to Cuba.

Given the few receivers, short range of transmission, and the high cost of installations, no action in this field is presently contemplated or recommended.

C. TV Transmission

TV signals from Miami are occasionally visible in Havana, but no regular transmission is possible due to the distances involved.

CIA has the capability for intruding on the dormant audio channels of Havana TV, utilizing small vessels but this is temporarily suspended due to technical difficulties.

Stratovision (beaming a TV signal from an airplane in flight) offers definite possibilities for short-term purely tactical utilization of TV. Preliminary studies indicate that air-borne TV transmitters operating over U.S. territory and territorial waters could beam a strong signal into the Havana area, using presently vacant channels. Our estimates indicate that it would probably take the Cubans from 15 to 21 days to engineer and put into operation an effective jamming system. This operation would cost approximately \$250,000, assuming that aircraft and crews would be made available by DOD and programming and technical staff would come from USIA.

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Final Considerations

1. One immediate step which could be taken to improve medium wave transmission to Cuba would be to intervene with the FCC to authorize WKWF in Key West (see I-B-2. above) to raise its power to 50 kw's and thus strengthen measurably its power in Cuba.

2. It is this Agency's view that Medium Wave or TV operations to Cuba must be tied to short term tactical operations. We do not favor the U.S. engaging in all-out electronic warfare with Cuba at this time.

(signed)

Donald M. Wilson
Deputy Director

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